

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1853

As Reported by House Committee On:
Business & Financial Services

Title: An act relating to modifying the definition of significant structure to allow an engineer to provide structural engineering services on certain structures without being registered as a structural engineer.

Brief Description: Modifying the definition of significant structure to allow an engineer to provide structural engineering services on certain structures without being registered as a structural engineer.

Sponsors: Representative Sells.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Business & Financial Services: 2/15/11, 2/17/11 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies the definition of "significant structure" to allow a professional engineer to provide structural engineering services on certain structures without being registered as a structural engineer.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Kelley, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Condotta, Hudgins, Hurst, Parker, Pedersen, Rivers, Ryu and Stanford.

Staff: Alison Hellberg (786-7152).

Background:

A professional engineer is a person who, through professional education and practical experience, possesses special knowledge of the mathematical and physical sciences and the principles and methods of engineering analysis and design. A professional engineer must

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register with the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (Board) by meeting work experience requirements and passing an examination.

Structural engineering is a specialized branch of professional engineering. To receive a certificate of registration in structural engineering, an applicant must meet the registration requirements of professional engineers, have two years of structural engineering experience, and pass an additional examination.

Legislation enacted in 2007 requires a professional engineer to be registered as a structural engineer to provide structural engineering services for significant structures.

Significant structures are defined as:

- hazardous facilities that contain explosive substances that will endanger the public if released;
- essential facilities such as hospitals, fire and police stations, structures that hold water or fire suppression materials, emergency vehicle shelters and garages, standby power-generating equipment, government communications centers, aviation control towers, and buildings having critical national defense functions;
- structures exceeding 100 feet in height;
- buildings of five stories or more;
- bridges with a span of more than 200 feet;
- piers with a surface area of more than 10,000 square feet; and
- buildings where more than 300 people congregate in one area.

The Board had authority to waive the structural engineer requirement until December 31, 2010. The Board could waive the requirement if the engineer was registered as a professional engineer as of January 1, 2007, and had sufficient experience in the duties typically provided by a structural engineer regarding significant structures. After December 31, 2010, the Board no longer had authority to waive the requirements.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The definition of "significant structures" is modified so that structures exceeding 100 feet in height that are telecommunication and broadcast antenna supporting tower structures that are not customarily occupied by human beings and that are located a distance of at least the height of the structure plus 100 feet from buildings customarily occupied by human beings are not considered significant structures. A professional engineer may perform structural engineering services on these structures without being registered as a structural engineer.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The definition of "significant structure" excludes telecommunication and broadcast antenna supporting tower structures that are not customarily occupied by human beings and that are located a distance of at least the height of the structure plus 100 feet from buildings customarily occupied by human beings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The idea for this bill came to the prime sponsor from constituents. This modifies the law affecting the design of certain structures and addresses some unintended consequences of the bill that passed in 2007.

(With concerns) This bill exempts any of these structures that exceed 100 feet in height. This should not be a concern for many of these structures. The Washington Association of Building Officials is concerned about some of the unusual structures in urban areas that are in excess of 100 feet. It would be good to have a structural engineer for these. An amendment that allows for a structural engineer in some of the unusual structures would be helpful.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Sells, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Ron Newbry, Washington Association of Building Officials.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.